

VZCZCXRO1363
PP RUEHGR
DE RUEHWN #0530 0831930
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 241930Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2171
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHCV/USDAO CARACAS VE PRIORITY
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0048
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J5 MIAMI FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS BRIDGETOWN 000530

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [ENRG](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [XL](#) [CU](#) [VE](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: HOW MANY CUBANS DOES IT TAKE TO SCREW IN A
LIGHTBULB?

REF: A. BRIDGETOWN 368

[B](#). 05 BRIDGETOWN 1954

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The Cuban Government recently promised to provide hundreds of thousands of Cuban-made energy-efficient lightbulbs to the island-nations of Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Cuban aid in the region, previously confined largely to medical assistance and scholarships (Ref B), seems to be taking a new angle with this initiative. This illuminating aid complements Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's PetroCaribe concessionary oil financing deal rather nicely, and helps Fidel Castro purchase an oath of silence from Eastern Caribbean leaders regarding Cuban human rights abuses. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) According to a press statement from the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba is offering to replace 215,000 lightbulbs with energy-efficient Cuban-made bulbs. The statement claims these bulbs could cut Antigua and Barbuda's energy bill by US\$1.5 million a year. A similar statement by the Government of Grenada mentions that the bulbs are supposed to last for 10,000 hours and use 50 to 80 percent less electricity than normal bulbs. According to local press in St. Vincent, that country will also receive similar light bulb aid.

[1](#)3. (U) This initiative accompanies a Cuban expansion of its diplomatic presence in the Eastern Caribbean. In April, Cuba is scheduled to open new embassies in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, making it the only country other than Venezuela to have an Embassy in all seven of the Eastern Caribbean islands Embassy Bridgetown covers. (Note: China has Embassies in every Eastern Caribbean island except the two that recognize Taiwan, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. End Note.)

[1](#)4. (SBU) Comment: Rising oil prices have hit these cash-strapped islands hard. Venezuela's PetroCaribe initiative combined with this new Cuban lightbulb aid could help both countries brighten their image and increase their influence in the Eastern Caribbean. These two energy programs expand on previous Cuban medical and educational assistance and appear to be another example of coordinated Venezuelan/Cuban aid activity in the region (Ref A). While Eastern Caribbean leaders reject Cuban and Venezuelan leftist social models, Cuba's aid efforts have bought the country support in the U.N. and silence from regional leaders on Cuba's human rights abuses and lack of democracy. End Comment.

KRAMER